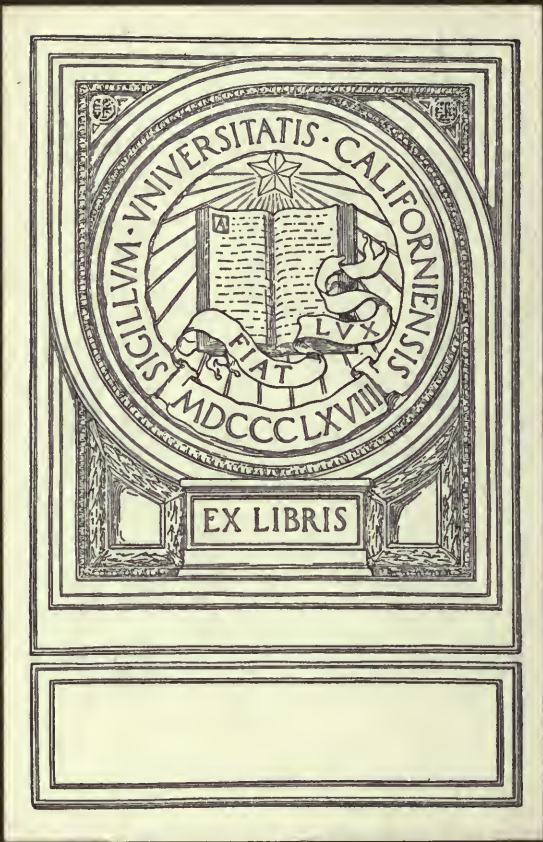


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In Memory of

**Asher B. Durand**



“The Century”



Art V



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PORTRAIT OF A. B. DURAND

PAINTED BY  
DANIEL HUNTINGTON  
IN 1857

ETCHED BY  
JAMES D. SMILLIE

# ASHER B. DURAND

A MEMORIAL ADDRESS

BY

DANIEL HUNTINGTON

<sup>11</sup>  
PRESIDENT OF THE CENTURY ASSOCIATION

UNIV. OF  
CALIFORNIA

NEW YORK  
PRINTED FOR THE CENTURY  
1887

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At the stated monthly meeting of the Century, held October 2, 1886, the President of the Association was, on motion of Mr. Louis Lang, requested to prepare an address on "the long and industrious life of Asher B. Durand, one of the founders of the Century," then recently deceased. The address was accordingly prepared, and was read before the Century at a meeting, held at the rooms of the Association on the evening of Saturday, April 9, 1887, to which were especially invited the officers of the New York Historical Society and of the National Academy of Design.

At the conclusion of the address, the Association requested a copy of it for publication; and, subsequently, a committee was appointed to print it for the Century, "with a reproduction of the portrait, now the property of the Club, as a frontispiece."



## ASHER BROWN DURAND

Was born at Jefferson Village (now in the township of South Orange, New Jersey) August 21, 1796. He was the eighth of a family of eleven children. The Durands were of French origin, descendants of Huguenot refugees—another instance of the loss to France and benefit to this country, as well as to the Protestant countries of Europe, of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes by Louis XIV in 1685.

The artist's father, John Durand, came from Connecticut about 1773 and purchased a small property in what is now South Orange, where he died in 1813. The French Huguenots' hatred of tyranny and their religious fervor suffered, we may believe, no injury in this instance by a moderate infusion of Connecticut steadiness.

In those days people helped themselves, as well as their neighbors, and an inventive capacity was of great service. This ingenuity the elder Durand possessed in an eminent degree. He was an adept in mechanics, and especially in the more delicate

branches. Besides being able to make and mend every sort of farm implement, he was skilled in the manufacture of jewelry and silver-ware, such as spoons, ear-rings, etc., and an excellent repairer of watches and clocks.

In addition to these valuable and useful gifts, he acted as a moral counsellor to his neighbors. Temperate in opinion, cool in judgment, and inflexibly honest, they could confidently consult him in all their difficulties. Though a plain country farmer, he was not indifferent to literature, judging by his books, for he was a subscriber to Gordon's "History of the United States" (a work of great interest, which every young American of our time should read), and he possessed the large folio "Brown's Bible," an important publication of that day. His shop was a resort of prominent, well-to-do men of the vicinity, where they discussed political and social questions, serving as an intellectual exchange or club (one of the seeds, in fact, of the Century), suiting the simple primitive habits of those colonial days. At the breaking out of the Revolution our artist's father enlisted in the army, but the authorities discovering his skill in mechanics, sent him back to make bayonets, the troops being sadly deficient in arms. The family possess one of those bayonets, unstained, I

believe, with the blood of British grenadiers. In one of General Washington's reconnoitring rides on the mountain behind the Durand farm, his spy-glass was broken, and it was given to the farmer to mend.

These incidents give an idea of the social and intellectual atmosphere which influenced the boyhood of Durand. The ornamental chasing which the father must have occasionally practised in finishing silver-ware and adorning watch-cases, we may well believe, fostered in the boy a fondness for artistic forms. The youth's education was only that of a village school at the beginning of this century. The grammar he used is a small volume, bound in sheep, with the inscription, "Bought July 8, 1811," its cover tastefully decorated by himself with pen scroll-work surrounding his monogram—his mind more engrossed, perhaps, with this outside illumination than with the nouns and verbs within.

Before he left his father's house, he studied an ingenious machine to render the abstract rules of grammar visible to the eye, by certain parts and movements demonstrating the meaning of the various parts of speech. At the old homestead, some ruins of this machine—wheels, mirrors, weights, etc.—remained for many years, an incomprehensible mystery to the present generation.

This grammatical machine was made by his elder brother, Cyrus Durand, to whose inventive genius we are indebted for great progress in the mechanic arts. His geometrical lathe, used in the processes of bank-note engraving, is one of the most remarkable instruments known in the mechanical world. The idea of the grammar machine was not original with him; he took it from an acquaintance and worked it out for practical application. In 1814, when eighteen years of age, Durand delivered a Fourth-of-July oration at the Presbyterian Church in Springfield, New Jersey, which was regarded by all his female acquaintances, old and young, as a masterpiece of thought and oratorical display. On the delivery of this oration, in which the "British Lion" was severely handled, in accordance with the spirit of the time, the audience and the orator marched in procession, accompanied by two of his brothers playing fife and drum. Such experiences served as a discipline, and filled out the slender opportunities of education.

Durand was mainly his own instructor. Except in the rudiments of engraving, he had no master, and not even afterwards in painting. Even in engraving, he *began* through his own unaided genius. In those times, in the back of the outer one of the usual double watch-cases, was placed a small watchmaker's card,



engraved on thin paper more or less ornamented. To produce one of these the young Durand hammered a copper cent thin and smooth enough to engrave on, and then made the tools with which to do the work. It was this effort which led to his pursuit of that art. A French gentleman, living at Elizabeth, on seeing this experiment, recommended sending the boy, when sixteen years old, to New York to learn engraving. In after years, at one of the evening receptions of the Academy of Design, when Durand, then president, was toasted and loudly called for, he made some remarks, and among other things said: "I began to love art when I was only *so high*," putting his hand down below the knee. The reporters were puzzled about expressing the idea. The French gentleman's advice was followed, and application was made to an engraver named Leney, an Englishman who charged \$1,000 for taking him. This demand being too high for the Durand purse, he was apprenticed to Peter Maverick, an engraver of reputation at the time, with whom he remained till he was twenty-one (five years). He soon surpassed his master, many of the works bearing Maverick's name, having been chiefly, and some entirely, executed by the pupil. A noted example is the engraved portrait of Genl. Bainbridge. The dry and feeble execution of Maverick

gradually has disappeared under the growing force and expression of Durand, and in this and other prints his firm and harmonious lines and lifelike character are clearly visible.

During this apprenticeship the principal employment was the copying of English engravings of a small size for the publishers, or the fanciful headings of cards and invitations, a fashion which had employed the talents of Bartolozzi in England, as engraver, and of Cipriani, Stothard, Westall, and others in designs. When this apprenticeship expired at Durand's twenty-first year, Maverick showed his good sense in securing his pupil's skill by making him a partner in the business. The style of the firm was Maverick & Durand, and much of the engraving bearing that imprint is the exclusive work of Durand. This partnership continued for about five years.

It has been said that engraving was at that time almost the only artistic pursuit in this country which could furnish a reasonable support. This is a mistake.

Trumbull was busy with his battle-pieces, and often painted portraits. Vanderlyn had painted the portraits which enlisted Aaron Burr in his favor. Waldo was then a student, beginning to practise portraiture, and eking out a scanty purse by painting signs for hatters, butchers, and tapsters. Some of those pic-



tures of beaver hats with their beautiful gloss, or ribs of beef and fat chickens, or foaming mugs of ale in the hands of jolly toppers, which were swinging in the wind in our boyish days, were the handicraft of Waldo, as he himself told the writer ; and, in after days, as he glanced at them, cracked and sobered by sun and rain, he was mortified, he said, to think that he had improved so little in the lapse of years. Jarvis, too, was starting on that series of the heroes of the war of 1812, some of which Durand afterwards engraved, and which now adorn the Governor's room at the City Hall. It was the incident of the copper plate hammered out from a cent, and the engraving on it for a watch-case, that turned the course of Durand in that direction, instead of painting, and we may be grateful, for it was not only an excellent discipline for him, but has given us an invaluable series of prints, which must be more and more treasured as time goes on.

Portrait engraving, nevertheless, was the main stay of engravers. Durand's accurate drawing, which he was constantly improving by careful study in the evenings at home, enabled him to preserve the likeness, as well as to execute his plates with that clearness and precision of line and freedom of handling which characterized all he touched.

His first original work in engraving, when, instead of copying the work of others, he engraved directly from a painting, was the head of a beggar, known as "Old Pat." This painting is by Waldo, is strongly painted, and now belongs to the Boston Athenæum. It is usually called "A Beggar with a Bone," and Durand's engraving was so well executed as to call forth the admiration of Col. Trumbull, who had, about that time, tried to engage Heath of London to engrave his "Declaration of Independence," but had declined to do so on account of the extravagant charge. He then applied to Durand, who was willing to undertake it for \$3,000, half the amount which Heath had demanded. Maverick wished to be joined in the commission, but Trumbull wisely demurred. Maverick objected, was offended, and the partnership was dissolved. Durand was now his own master, and gladly received the commission. He was chiefly engaged on this large plate for three years, and the result was the masterpiece we know so well. In it he has preserved the likenesses with great fidelity, combining a free and vigorous use of the lines with a broad and rich effect of light and shade most attractive to the eye. It established his reputation as a master of the art. Durand always spoke gratefully of Trumbull, who thus recognized and encouraged

him. Trumbull painted his portrait, which is in possession of the family.

In the collection of the engravings by Durand belonging to his son, the various stages of this print can be seen, from the first outline to its final perfection, showing the gradual process of the patient and skilful hand—an invaluable lesson of the engraver's art. Trumbull was greatly pleased. In a letter to the Marquis de Lafayette, dated New York, October 20, 1823, he writes: "I have sent to the care of Wells, Williams, & Co., bankers in Paris, who will forward it to you, a small case containing a proof impression (*avant la lettre*) of a print which has been engraved here from my painting of the Declaration of Independence, by a young engraver, born in this vicinity, and now only twenty-six years old. This work is wholly *American*, even to the paper and printing, a circumstance which renders it popular here, and will make it a curiosity to you, who knew America when she had neither painters nor engravers, nor arts of any kind, except those of *stern utility*."

The name of the engraver is not given, probably because his signature was on the plate, with that of Trumbull, as is usual in proofs.

After this Durand executed many small engravings for annuals, then coming into fashion. Most of these

small prints were copied from large English engravings, but some from original paintings.

The "Dull Lecture," after Newton's charming picture, at that time in the collection of Philip Hone, now in the Lenox Library, and "Ann Page, Slender and Shallow," after Leslie's fine group, also then belonging to Philip Hone, but unfortunately not now in this country—these small engravings are gems of beauty. So are also "The Sisters," after Morse, and "The Power of Love," representing Cupid riding and controlling a dragon, after a renaissance design. The painting belonged to a noted dealer and restorer known as "Old Paff," in whose dimly lighted and musty den the connoisseurs of early New York congregated to wonder at the "Raphaels, Correggios, and stuff" which the lean and keen-eyed "Paff" had raked up, begrimed and daubed over, in some obscure pawnbroker's shop, and cleaned and brought out in gemmy brilliance, and over whose beauties he would expatiate enthusiastically for hours.

From 1822 to 1836 Durand was mainly an engraver, but was constantly improving by the practice of drawing, chiefly during the evenings at home, also at the old American Academy, and then again in the schools of the National Academy after its foundation in 1826,

he having been actively engaged in originating that institution.

I remember well the careful and accurate drawings he made as lately as 1836 and 1837, soon after the first life-school was opened at the Academy rooms in Beekman St. (Clinton Hall). He was then an established artist, forty years old, but was a devoted student of the figure in the life-class.

When he first came to New York (in 1812) he said there was but one store in which the most ordinary print could be found for sale, and a lithograph he saw seemed to him an extraordinary masterpiece of art. There were no shops for plaster casts, but already the American Academy of Arts had a collection of casts of statues and busts, purchased for them by Mr. Rob. R. Livingston, then our minister to France. Dunlap speaks of Durand as drawing from these casts in 1817, and notices his proficiency at that time. These studies of antique sculpture strongly influenced the style of bank-note engraving, in which Durand was actively engaged during some years. His designs for this purpose show a refined and classical taste which he may be said to have introduced, and which corresponded with a theory he often expressed, that the mind and feeling of the artist, and not a mere imitation of natural objects, inclined the intelligent observer to



appreciate works of art. He maintained that the great artists of antiquity chose objects in nature to express human emotions, to tell a story, and not, like some fashionable schools of the day, making it a prime object to exhibit the dexterity of a brilliant execution, and thus reduce art to a contest for technical skill.

In his landscapes he remained true to this principle, using the facts of nature to express a certain feeling and poetical sentiment. His aim was thus creative, though in his studies he was marvellously realistic and exact. In his bank-note vignettes you may find the gods and goddesses adapted to the most utilitarian subject. In a common one-dollar bank-note he introduced a beautiful antique figure of Justice holding the scales, and in an illustration for the Erie Canal, Neptune starting the waters of the lakes towards the sea, and in the distance the canal-boats being "locked down" to tide-water. He was perhaps the first to introduce the gods of Olympus to the banks of finance, and there they have been held in bonds to this day.

Durand's taste in design and skill in the use of the graver had the effect to attract other men of rare talent to bank-note engraving, as in the instance of Casilear, who became his pupil, and soon distinguished himself for the force and brilliancy of his execution, following also the example of the elder artist by de-

voting himself to *landscape*, in which field he has won so much honor. The superior execution of American bank-notes secured for this country the production of paper currency, bonds, etc., for foreign countries, as well as the enormous business of our own government. At the present time the chief production of such engraving is for the South American States, and especially for Brazil. In 1822 Durand had an assistant named Pekinino, a clever Italian engraver, but an unprincipled adventurer. They engraved each other's portraits, and soon after they separated. The star of Bolivar, the South American Liberator, just then rose to the zenith of popular favor, and Pekinino, suffering from chronic consumption of the purse, saw a chance of reaping a small harvest. Possessing the plate of the portrait of his friend Durand, he erased his name, substituted that of Bolivar, and sold it as a veritable likeness of the popular hero. The print is well engraved, and is a fair likeness of Durand in youth.

After the large plate of the Declaration of Independence, Durand executed many portrait prints—a full length of Gen. Jackson, then the hero of the war, after the full length by Vanderlyn in the City Hall, a spirited work; also a number of distinguished clergymen, showing that the *churches* were devoted to their pastors, and the people wanted their portraits. To

this we are indebted for the speaking intellectual countenances of Larned, Milnor, Mason, Nott, Spring, Sprague, Milledollar, and Summerfield. Durand's Mason well portrays the energetic and earnest expression of that divine; and Summerfield, who moved enormous audiences to tears, in Durand's print yet beams with evangelic fervor. Verplanck, the first president of the Century, and a man of consummate judgment in art and oratory, often spoke of these portraits with admiration.

In 1824 the city published an important work commemorative of the Erie Canal Celebration, and for this Durand engraved several strongly characterized portraits—Cadwallader Colden, then Mayor, also Philip Hone, Wm. Paulding, and Dr. Mitchell, manly works, now exceedingly scarce and valuable.

None of Durand's portrait engravings excel some of those small ones he executed for Herring and Longacre's National Portrait Gallery, and of these the heads of Gov. Ogden, Chief-Justice Marshall, Chas. Carroll, and Col. Trumbull, hold preëminent rank. The Marshall is after Inman, and is admirable. Gov. Ogden was done from a life-size portrait painted by Durand himself. The Chas. Carroll (preferred by some) is after Chester Harding, and represents the patriotic signer in his venerable age and calm



dignity. The Trumbull is from the Waldo portrait in the Yale College gallery, and is truly a gem of art. While it was in progress, Trumbull gave Durand sittings for the perfection of the plate, and with those masterly yet delicate strokes of the graver he added an expression of individual life which greatly enhances its interest. Remembering Trumbull well, and often meeting him in my early years, I see in the print the very expression of the living man, the clever artist, the mettlesome soldier, and the polished gentleman of the old school.

These plates may well serve as examples for portrait engravers nowadays. We see too many cold, dry, and mechanical portrait-prints—sooty in effect, dull in expression, and terribly like the originals, ruled off by machinery in haste for a grab at the beggarly prices for which they are ordered. There are exceptions, certainly, and among them some of the small portraits on bank-notes. The wood engravers also have given us some fine examples.

Although so much occupied with engraving, Durand took the time to paint an occasional portrait or group of figures. In 1825 he was a ringleader of that band of rebel students of the old American Academy of Fine Arts, who, disgusted with the harsh response to their request for better opportunities for drawing

from the antique, united in a society for evening study, which soon resulted in the foundation of the National Academy of Design. To the first exhibition of this Academy, in 1826, and to several succeeding ones, he not only contributed proof impressions of his engravings, but paintings; and the landscape backgrounds he introduced in portraits of ladies and children charmed the visitors and gave a foretaste of his talents in that direction. It is evident from the early catalogues, that he was then aiming at serious historical painting. In 1826, the first exhibition of the N. A. D., he sent "Mary Magdalen at the Sepulchre." The following year he contributed "Samson shorn of his locks by the Philistines while asleep in the lap of Delilah," and, in 1829, a "Hagar and Ishmael." In 1831, another "Samson and Delilah," meaning, doubtless, to warn the strong men of New York to beware of the blandishments of the enticing belles of the period, whose snares were spread at that time only from the Battery to Chambers St. The same year he exhibited the first decided venture in the field where he was to win such unfading laurels—"A View of the Catskill Mountains," probably the scene on the creek, which he afterwards engraved of a small size with great delicacy and refinement.

In 1833, he sent a portrait of a noted man who, at

that day, was stirring the vitals of the dyspeptic world by his lectures on diet—*Sylvester Graham*, the founder of "*Graham Bread*," "one slice of which," Catherine Sedgwick said, "was enough to sanctify a whole dinner." Graham not only invented brown bread, but he wrote verses. One of his efforts in this line is a satirical poem, called forth on the first appearance of that fashionable protuberance to a lady's costume, called "The Bustle," which is the title of the said poem. Durand, to please Graham, and doubtless willing to help satirize a form, which belied so villainously the chaste contour of a Venus or Diana, furnished a design for the cover, representing a lady in profile with a number of cupids hovering over and dancing on this part of her attire. The poem was printed, but, on the eve of publication, suppressed. Mr. John Durand has a copy, and it would well come in play now that the bustle is again raging and rampant.

In the same exhibition, 1833, appeared that striking and truthful portrait of Gov. Ogden, now in the collection of the Historical Society.

Then follow in '34 and '35 the fine portraits of President James Madison and John Quincy Adams, the property of the Century Club. That of Madison was painted in the extreme old age of the ex-President, and is accurately drawn and refined in color, represent-

ing so well the pallor and thoughtfulness of the venerable statesman as to place it in the front rank of portraiture. These and several other portraits of distinguished men were commissioned by a man whose acquaintance Durand made at that time—*Mr. Luman Reed*, whose friendship had a lasting effect on the career of the artist. Mr. Reed was the first American who formed a collection wholly composed of works of our own artists. Besides several portraits, he ordered historical subjects, and his warm friendship and enlightened and generous treatment of Durand, as well as of Cole, Mount, Flagg, and other American artists, gave an impetus to the art of our country, and was soon followed by others in the same spirit. The portrait of Mr. Reed (exhibited in the Durand collection at Ortgie's Gallery), the property of Mr. Sturges, is a truthful likeness of one of the noblest of our New York merchants. The collection he formed became, after his death, through the liberality of his relatives and friends, *The New York Gallery of Fine Arts*, since united to that of the Historical Society.

A group of New York merchants, warm friends of Durand, caught Mr. Reed's spirit, and distinguished among them was Jonathan Sturges, who formed a valuable collection wholly of American art, aided liberally in the establishment of the New York gallery,

and in connection with Chas. M. Leupp, another noble friend of our artists, furnished a large amount of money toward the purchase of ground and building of the galleries in Broadway opposite Bond St., owned by the Academy, and in which the exhibitions were held for several years.

Abraham M. Cozzens should be remembered as associated with these gentlemen in the liberal and intelligent cultivation of art, and who, by his enthusiasm, aroused a similar spirit in a large circle of friends, such as Marshall O. Roberts, Robert M. Oliphant, Wm. H. Osborn, and others.

The engraving of *Musidora*, executed from an original design by Durand, is a work of this period, and was done to try his skill in engraving the nude figure. It is a charming work, but the taste of the public did not lead in that direction; on the contrary, there was then a decided prejudice against nude figures, and, consequently, the *Musidora*, which is a beautiful and graceful figure and finely engraved, failed to secure the admiration its merits deserved.

The figure subjects and portraits which chiefly occupied the time of Durand at this period show that he considered this the department he was to follow. The passion for landscape had not yet taken complete possession of his mind. The difficulty of procuring



models or costumes was great. The various studio properties needed to pursue figure composition were not at hand, but the open fields invited him : there was a free range and every variety to tempt the painter. He began to yield to the delight of landscape, and was heard to say : " I leave the human trunk and take to the trunks of trees."

In 1836, when I was a pupil under Prof. Morse, I first met Durand. Ver Bryck, then also a fellow-student, and who had made the acquaintance of Durand at the schools of the Academy, took me to the studio of the great engraver. He received us with the frank cordiality which was always his characteristic trait, and showed us some plates in progress, among others that of the *Ariadne*, then approaching completion. We expressed our delight at its exceeding delicacy and beauty, and he asked if we would like to see the original painting. Though two rather bashful young men, we perhaps somewhat too eagerly assented to the proposal.

He at once drew back a dark green curtain which hid the picture from the vulgar gaze. A sudden light seemed to burst on the shaded studio from the luminous and palpitating figure of the sleeping beauty. The sombre depths of olive foliage under which she reposed heightened the glow of her graceful and

tenderly rounded form. One fancied that her calmly closed lids would open and the startled girl hastily wrap the drapery about her to hide such loveliness from profane eyes. The engraving renders the drawing, the subtle gradations of light, the luminous shadows, the sweet repose of the whole, with a skill never surpassed.

But let us, sober Centurians, beware of the intoxication which long ago enticed the frenzied Bacchus, lord of the purple grape, to lose his senses at the feet of this bewitching goddess.

At about the year 1836 Durand's career as an engraver ended. His reputation was established on solid grounds. His triumph was complete. His chief works in that department take rank with the masterpieces of Morghen, Strange, and Sharp, and are treasured among collectors as acknowledged examples of high art.

For several years he was mainly a figure and portrait painter. This was a second and marked period in his life.

A portrait of Edward Everett, who was then beginning to attract attention as an orator, was greatly admired. Durand gave to it a bold arrangement of drapery, by a cloak thrown over one shoulder in the Spanish fashion then prevailing; the broad black-

velvet lining contrasting with the lucid color of the flesh and the flashing eye of the Senator.

During this period appeared the cabinet group of "The Pedlar," the "Capture of Major André," and the "Wrath of Peter Stuyvesant." The latter, an illustration of Irving's "Knickerbocker," and "The Pedlar," painted for Luman Reed, are now at the Historical Society. Three artists sat for heads in the group of the "Wrath of Peter Stuyvesant," somewhat caricatured to suit the story. Stuyvesant, it was said, was a portrait of Luman Reed. The tall, frightened attendant Durand painted from himself, and General Cummings acted as trumpeter. His next picture, the "Capture of Major André," was engraved by Alfred Jones for the Art Union. He was careful to tell the story truthfully, and has portrayed the self-possessed ease and military bearing of André, as well as the quiet determination and honest patriotism of Paulding and his companion. The engraving was so well executed as to establish the reputation of Alfred Jones, was widely disseminated, and has been reproduced in signs and banners.

In 1838 appeared "Rip Van Winkle with the Crew of Hendrick Hudson," imbued with the weird mystery which Irving has thrown around the legend.

The portrait of Bryant was a much later work—



painted after Durand had ceased to exhibit figures or portraits. This belongs to the poet's family, while the Century has a duplicate, and is a faithful likeness of the then middle-aged poet, though few can now recall his appearance at that day. The admirable engraving of this portrait by Alfred Jones was worked upon by Durand by request of the engraver, and was the last time he took the graver in hand. Some time before bidding a final farewell to his practice as an engraver, he was stealthily indulging his love for landscape in a room adjoining his engraver's studio. On one occasion the writer was admitted into this mysterious sanctum, and on his easel was a picture which Durand modestly spoke of as a "doubtful experiment"—a scene in the Catskill region, in which a river flowed calmly through fields and past forests, leading the eye towards a distant chain of mountains, over which floated a silver haze. And in 1838 he exhibited a twilight, which rendered with much feeling the solemn glow and deep-toned richness of the hour.

In 1839 and '40 he had given himself heartily to landscape, and two important pictures, "Morning" and "Evening,"—painted for F. J. Betts, and now in New Haven,—held crowds of visitors in admiration. Soon there was exhibited another large picture,

called "Sabbath Bells," painted for Gouverneur Kemble, of Cold Spring. It was a lovely scene near a sequestered village. Over the still water and through the old elms the sunlight streamed cheerily; a holy calm seemed to pervade the air; a few villagers were on their way to church, and one could fancy he heard the bells sounding softly through the luminous atmosphere.

Durand had been a pioneer in engraving; he was now a pioneer in another very important branch of study, viz., that of painting carefully finished studies directly from nature out-of-doors. Before his day our landscape painters had usually made only pencil drawings or, at most, slight water-color memoranda of the scenes they intended to paint, aiding the memory by writing on the drawing hints of the color and effect. Cole, to be sure, lived at Catskill, in full view of magnificent scenery, and was endowed with a wonderful memory, so that he gave an astonishing look of exact truth to many of his pictures of American scenery, but he rarely, if at all, up to that period, painted his studies in the open air.

Durand went directly to the fountain-head, and began the practice of faithful transcripts of "bits" for use in his studio, and the indefatigable patience and the sustained ardor with which he painted these

studies not only told on his elaborate works, but proved a contagious influence, since followed by most of our artists, to the inestimable advantage of the great landscape school of our country.

In 1840 Durand went to Europe in company with Casilear, Kensett, and Rossiter. He remained abroad a year, visiting London, Holland, Switzerland, and Italy. As is frequently the case at the first acquaintance with the old masters, there was some disappointment. At the National Gallery in London he saw Claude's pictures for the first time. He wrote: "They do not astonish me, although there are parts in some of them of surpassing beauty. There is generally a cold green and blue appearance about them, and no particularly striking effects in color or light and shade. Still, on careful examination, they evince that knowledge of nature for which Claude is celebrated, particularly in atmosphere, the character and softness of foliage, and more especially in water, as seen in some of his seaport subjects. On the whole," he said, "I am somewhat disappointed in Claude. I see but two or three of his works which meet my expectations, but," he adds, "to me these alone are worth a passage across the Atlantic." In London he met Leslie and Wilkie, then at the zenith of their fame. He describes

Wilkie as "a gruff-looking Scotchman of plain, blunt manners, truly Scotch in face and accent." Durand had not the luck to surprise Wilkie, as Hayden did, stripped to the waist and painting from himself before a mirror and exclaiming: "Capital practice, Hayden!"

During this visit he saw Turner also, and visited the house where his paintings were kept. Few were admitted to this den, which was a wilderness of accumulated studies and works in every stage of progress. Some time after this Turner, on being shown Smillie's engraving of an illustration Durand made for Halleck's poems, called "Our Own Green Forest-Land," said that it was the finest thing he had seen of American art.

From London he took steamer to Antwerp, enjoying as well as he could the midnight horrors of that sickening channel. While at Antwerp the festival in honor of Rubens, and the inauguration of the statue of that great artist, took place. Elated by the splendid spectacle, he writes: "It is here that masters in the fine arts are duly honored. It makes one feel proud to be one of the fraternity. Not only the name of Rubens, but the names of all the distinguished Flemish and Dutch masters are posted about the streets."

This is in the spirit of Corregio, who, on seeing a

picture of Titian, exclaimed : " Anch' Io son Pittore." (I also am a painter.) In Paris he made a short stay, drinking inspiration at the Louvre, but soon journeyed to Switzerland, making some sketches there which he afterwards painted. In October the party reached Florence. Here the beautiful " Marine," by Claude, must have strongly interested him, as the influence of its softly diffused light glancing over the gently disturbed sea was in harmony with some of his own later productions. He copied a portrait of Rembrandt in the Uffizzi palace. (Exhibited at the sale in 1887.)

The winter of '40-'41 was mostly spent in Rome, where he was joined by his friend, F. W. Edmonds. There he painted some heads of the picturesque old models and various studies of figures, pipers, and Contadini, including that of a donkey, which, thanks to the superior facilities for studio practice in Rome, was hauled up a flight of stone stairs by ropes, where, it is needless to say, the donkey posed with becoming gravity.

He also made an admirable copy of a grand head of a monk, by Titian, and a figure from the same painter's famous composition in the Borghese Palace, called " Venus Blindfolding Cupid," of which there is a masterly engraving by Strange.

This European episode for a time distracted his at-



tention. The mighty works of the Venetian painters and the deep tones of Rembrandt strongly affected him. For a while after his return to New York in '41, he busied himself in finishing pictures begun or sketched abroad. In the exhibition of '42 appeared "Il Pappagallo, a Lady with a Parrot," of a rich Venetian hue. Also a number of Roman heads, two or three Swiss landscapes, a "Cottage on Lake Thun," a "View at Stratford on Avon," and soon after several other European landscapes.

European images were still hovering in his brain. There was danger that the wild freshness of our American forests, lakes, and mountains might lose their hold on his heart. But no. His sound sense, the free air of his happy out-door studies, his undying love of country, soon resumed the sway of a first love, and now began anew that series of true American landscape, which for many years delighted the eyes of all true lovers of our scenery and our art, and gave Durand that well-earned place he holds among the best artists of America.

Two important landscapes, called "The Close of a Sultry Day," and "An Old Man's Reminiscences," the latter now in Albany, were among the first to indicate the return of his early feeling, with greatly increased knowledge and power.

In 1846 he won great applause by his exhibit of a large upright view from the edge of a wood, painted for A. M. Cozzens, and now a striking ornament in the collection of Mr. Morris K. Jesup. I remember well how the groups of artists gathered in front of it on varnishing day at the Academy, warmly discussing its merits and expressing their admiration.

“An Old Man’s Lesson” soon followed, and “Dover Plains,” in which he showed his skill in far-stretching meadows and distant hills enveloped in silvery light.

One of the best works of that period, exhibited in '49, was a cascade in a rocky mountain gorge, in which he introduced Bryant and Cole standing on a foreground rock enjoying the scene. This picture, called “Kindred Spirits,” was painted for presentation to Bryant, and is in possession of the poet’s daughter, Miss Julia Bryant.

One of his favorite compositions, called “Lake Hamlet,” was painted for Gov. Hamilton Fish, and Mr. Walters, of Baltimore, possesses one of Durand’s masterpieces., a large upright forest scene, truthfully and vigorously executed.

Hardly any of his pictures have been more admired and enjoyed than the two somewhat similar ones of “The Primæval Forest,” painted for his friend and



pupil, Mr. Neilson, (a very rich and strongly painted work,) which is now in the collection on exhibition at Ortgies' rooms in Broadway, and the larger upright painted for Jonathan Sturges, called "In the Woods." In this great work, the solemnity of an American forest is forcibly rendered; the giant trees are rich with moss, fallen trunks strew the ground, a brook sparkles in the shady depths, and through the tangled boughs and leaves come flashes of a luminous sky beyond. Judge Speir, an intimate and life-long friend of the artist, possesses another fine forest scene in similar feeling, and rich in color.

The open scene of the Catskill clove, with mountain sides in a gray atmosphere, is our Century picture; and he also painted the study of "Franconia Notch," on the easel, in the half-length portrait of him which was painted by the writer for the Century. That study on the easel is a reduced copy of a large picture, which he was painting for Robert L. Stuart at the time he was sitting for the portrait.

The sculptor Brown was an intimate friend of Durand, and modelled a bust of him, an excellent likeness (recently presented to the Academy of Design by John Durand). The sculptor had at his house in Newburgh a "June Shower," by Durand—one of his best efforts, in which the sunlight is burst-

ing through a rift in the hurrying clouds and streaking with brightness a part of the dripping valley. (This is also now in the Exhibition in Broadway.)

Durand was fond of Lake George scenery, and there painted many of his best studies. I visited the pleasant resort he frequented late in life, called Bosom Bay, at Hewlett's Landing. Arriving late in the afternoon, as the shadows were deepening in the ravines of Black Mountain, we were kindly welcomed by the white-haired artist, who was smoking his quiet pipe, on the old-fashioned stoop of the snug farmhouse, surrounded by a group of friends and members of his family. The following day we made a party to row to Harbor Island for sketches and a pic-nic. It was a lovely day in the early autumn. Harbor Island is one of the beauties of Lake George—irregular in shape, varied by forests and rocky shores, having a sequestered interior bay with a narrow entrance, where the still, transparent water, protected from wind, reflects every leaf. Durand, with his accustomed industry, was soon busy with a study. Some sketched, or strolled about, or lounged with idle oars to various points of the shore. The views are beautiful. To the east rises the massive form of Black Mountain; to the south stretches the lake, dotted by the hundred islands of the Narrows; and the western outlook is

hemmed in by the broken outline, deep forests, and rocky precipices of Tongue Mountain. In this fascinating region Durand calmly but earnestly pursued his summer studies for several seasons. The serene, translucent waters of Lake George were typical of the frank, placid, and truthful spirit of the man.

Durand seldom attempted scenes of storm or violence ; such were not in his natural vein, and are not executed with the hearty spirit of his gentler works. One of the noblest and most successful of these bolder efforts was painted for Robert Oliphant, to whom our artists are deeply indebted for his cheering personal friendship and intelligent encouragement of American Art. The picture referred to is called " The Symbol." An ominous storm is gathering and blackening around a mountain ; a giant peak rises high above the murky confusion below, catching a golden flush of sunlight through a rift in the clouds. It is an admirable picture, but the hopeful glow on the granite peak reflects more of the artist's cheerful temper than the dismal strife of the swirling clouds below. What a contrast to this is the bright, sunny, and consoling picture called " Sunday Morning," kindly sent from Providence by the owner, Mr. Royal Taft, to grace the Memorial Exhibition of the artist's works, now open at Ortgies'. A sweet serenity pervades it in every part. It is a poem,

suggesting to the mind that stillness and feeling of sacred rest which is often experienced on a calm Sunday morning in a beautiful country. Another picture, the subject of which was suggested to him by Mr. Sturges, and which is a complete exception to his usual vein, is called "God's Judgment upon Gog." It illustrates certain passages in the prophecy of Ezekiel.

"Behold [saith the Lord] I am against thee, O Gog, the chief Prince of Meshech and Tubal. I will turn thee back . . . and I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand. . . . Thou shalt fall, upon the mountains of Israel thou and all thy bands. . . . I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured."

So far as I can vaguely recall the picture, it represented a scene of darkness and desolation in the valley of graves. The hosts of Gog are scattered and falling in terror, while the blackened air is horrid with the ominous flight of birds of prey snuffing the blood of the slain oppressors of Israel. Out of a cavernous gap in the mountains rush forth hordes of wild beasts—tigers and leopards, swift and stealthy, thirsting for blood. There is something of an awful and demoniac spirit about this scene, the widest departure

from Durand's favorite themes known to me. Doubtless Mr. Sturges wished to try his friend's skill in a grand imaginative work, and Durand studied it earnestly, but it cannot be called entirely successful.

One of the later pictures (the largest, I believe, he ever painted), and one of the grandest and best, is the "Forest Scenery" now in the Corcoran Gallery. It was the last he painted before moving from New York to New Jersey. It is a noble work, broadly and simply painted. It represents the profound solitude of the forest primeval in its grandeur and silence, reveals the vigor of a master's hand and the ripe experience of a long life of serious study, and it is, moreover, strongly characteristic of the calmness and solidity of the author's mind. It is a subject of congratulation that such a grand and representative work is permanently placed in a fire-proof public institution so important as the Corcoran Gallery.

After his retreat to his pleasant country residence in Orange, he seldom exhibited at the Academy. On occasions he sent groups of his studies from nature, which were eagerly welcomed by the artists.

A large number of these invaluable studies are at this moment to be seen at the exhibition in Broadway, held by his executors, and are of great variety, beauty, and interest.



In 1874 he made his last academic *exhibit*—the “Franconia Notch,” now belonging to the widow of Robert L. Stuart—a fine picture, painted several years earlier.

*His last picture*, painted in 1879, was a “Souvenir of the Adirondacks”—a sunset, in which the softly diffused light, spreading over a placid lake and quiet sky, aptly figures the tranquillity of his closing years. As he made the last touches to this picture, with a hand enfeebled by the weight of eighty-three years, he laid down his palette and brushes for ever, saying that “his hand would no longer do what he wanted it to do.”

On the resignation of Prof. Morse, in 1845, Durand was elected President of the Academy of Design, to which office he was unanimously re-elected till 1860. He guided the affairs of the Academy with wisdom, and the schools, exhibitions, and general affairs were successfully conducted during his energetic but conservative administration. There were troubles, however, which annoyed him. The Academy struggled with financial disasters, owing partly to business crises, partly to the distraction of free exhibitions, which diminished its receipts. We had no permanent home, the antique casts were in a hired loft, and, in order to raise money for a new building and other



purposes by issuing bonds, the Academy had been obliged to place its property in the hands of trustees, of which Durand was one.

Difficulties arose because of conflicting ideas between the trustees and the Academy. Some urged the risking the expense of a fine building; others argued for prudence, economy, and a plain house. Durand sympathized with the artists, and strove to reconcile the opponents, but he hated turmoil, and, to secure quiet for his studies, he talked of resigning the presidency. And, notwithstanding the earnest wishes of the members, he did so in 1860. Some time before this, a circumstance occurred which furnished an occasion for the resignation he had contemplated. Proposals had been made for a new building on Twenty-third Street. Plans were invited from a few architects, and a time fixed for their presentation for decision by the Council. On the evening of the appointed day the Council assembled. President Durand was in the chair. The designs of the competing architects were displayed, but only two were judged worthy of serious consideration. Of these one was by an architect then well-known for his practical skill, but was thought too plain and commonplace in its effect to the eye. The other was by Eidlitz, in the Paladian style, pleasing and appropri-

ate. Durand decidedly favored the latter. Most of us agreed with him, and after discussion we voted to accept it. This decision was not absolutely final, the consent of the trustees being necessary. We adjourned, and President Durand went home. No sooner had he left, than the officer in charge of the designs said : "Gentlemen, there is another drawing, but as it came after the time fixed for receiving designs had passed, I have not thought it proper to place it in competition." We exclaimed against so much red tape, and asked to see it. It was brought out. It was a design by Wight, very much like our building as it now stands, but more beautiful and picturesque. We called for a re-organization. The vice-president took the chair ; we reconsidered the previous vote, and almost unanimously decided for Wight's design.

Our excitement, and the vexation at the withholding of the best design, betrayed us into this lawless disrespect to our honored president. As one of the culprits, I may say it was *outrageous*, and Durand was justly indignant. We apologized ; the whole body of academicians joined in a petition, but he never took the chair again.

I must say that, though he was resolute in refusing to condone this unmannerly proceeding of ours in his

*official* capacity, he was *personally* as kind and friendly as ever to every one of us ; if possible, even more so. I believe he was glad to escape from the anxiety and responsibility of the presidency, and resume the even tenor of his studious life.

I am confident he was happier, and grateful for an occurrence which furnished him with a good opportunity of retiring. He wished to do so some time before, but felt bound to remain in the office on account of the large amount of money which his two friends, Jonathan Sturges and Chas. M. Leupp, had loaned to the Academy, in great measure out of personal regard to him, and on bonds which Durand had signed as president, and for the payment of which he felt an honorable responsibility. This debt had been recently in great part cancelled or provided for.

Durand was an original member of the Sketch Club, and seldom failed to attend its meetings. The easy informality of its society, the free interchange of ideas with cultivated men, artists, and amateurs, rendered it a source of pleasant recreation, as well as a time of improving and stimulating contact of wits.

His friend, C. C. Ingham, was also a zealous member. Of Irish birth, a painter of highly finished portraits, a favorite with the ladies, who, if they were young and beautiful, were sure of not losing by his

pencil, and if they were fading, could rely on his restoring their withered bloom; he was, withal, excitable, and even irascible. On a certain dilemma occurring in affairs at the Academy of Design, he indulged in some passionate words, and was rather vigorously reprov'd by the amiable president. To be calmly put down when red-hot with rage, was too much for the high-strung Ingham. He retorted furiously, but Durand smiled and said nothing. It was a good instance of his self-control. They did not speak to each other for many months. Jonathan Sturges was a sincere friend of both men. He was pained at this estrangement. He determined to reconcile them. At a meeting of the Sketch Club at his house, when all were gathered about the supper-table, the guests being in genial spirits (the champagne foaming), Mr. Sturges said: "Mr. Durand—Mr. Ingham, shake hands and be friends for my sake." Durand replied: "I shall be glad to do so," and gave his hand to Ingham, who shook it warmly, saying: "It gives me great pleasure," and the two were ever after firm friends. "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God."

In June, 1872, at the suggestion of Mr. Jervis McEntee, several of Durand's friends formed a surprise party to visit him at his house in South Orange.

Mr. McEntee, in a letter to John Durand, writes : " The Durand pic-nic came off Saturday, June 8th, and was a perfect success. It had rained in the morning, but cleared off before it was time for us to go ; but the woods were so wet that we had our table spread upon the wide veranda of the house, where we remained the whole day, and every one seemed to enjoy it to the utmost. Mr. Bryant came all the way from Roslyn in spite of the threatening weather. I was sure he would come if it were possible, and he seemed to enjoy the occasion exceedingly, and made a nice little address at the lunch-table."

There were present at this party, as far as can be now remembered : Palmer, the sculptor, and Mrs. Palmer, who came from Albany for the occasion ; Mrs. Godwin, who came with her father, Mr. Bryant ; Mr. and Mrs. McEntee ; Eastman Johnson and wife ; Kensett, with a young lady from Philadelphia ; Sanford Gifford and his sister ; Whittredge and wife ; C. P. Cranch ; Geo. H. Hall ; Mr. and Mrs. Hicks ; Mr. and Mrs. David Johnson ; Quincy Ward ; Falconer Vollmering ; Brevoort and Miss Bascom (now Mrs. Brevoort) ; Wm. Page and wife ; Wm. Hart and wife ; besides the families of Mr. Durand and of his son-in-law, Mr. Woodman, and others of their guests.

Mr. McEntee says : " Mr. Durand acknowledged



the compliment in a speech, which showed how deeply he was touched by this remembrance of the artists. It was a most satisfactory day, and I shall always remember with gratification that my suggestion was so heartily responded to, and that we were able to show in so fitting a way our veneration for the old man." Mr. McEntee adds : " Just before I left the city I received a letter from John Durand, in which he told me the affair had had the happiest effect upon his father. He had walked nearly over the Orange Mountain, and was in the best of spirits." It was the misfortune of the writer to lose the pleasure of this festival by illness.

There are several portraits of Durand. One by Metcalf, as a young man ; the Trumbull portrait, with a portfolio in his hand ; a richly colored head by Jewett ; one painted by himself, in the possession of the Academy of Design ; another by Elliott, belonging to Mr. Walters, of Baltimore, engraved by Halpin ; and the half-length by Huntington, painted for the Century Club. Rowse made an excellent crayon drawing. There is also the bust by H. K. Brown, presented by John Durand to the Academy of Design, and the Art Union issued a medal by Carl Muller, bearing on the obverse a profile to left of Durand, and on the reverse a palette with brushes and oak and



laurel leaves. One of these medals was deposited in the corner-stone of the National Academy of Design.

Durand was endowed with certain traits which combined to form a great artist. He was early smitten with the *love of nature*, his native *patience* was strengthened by the severity of his early struggles, and to these was added an indomitable *perseverance*. His *love of nature* was a *passion*, an enthusiasm always burning within him, but it was like a steady fire, not a sudden blaze quickly sinking to ashes. *His patience* enabled him to guide this intense delight in beauty into paths of quiet, steady search for the result. It was touch after touch, line upon line, a gradual approach to victory. Added to this was his untiring *perseverance*, which no difficulties could overcome, no obstacles affright, or even cold indifference discourage.

Though full of nervous energy, alive to every beauty, keenly sensitive to criticism, and a severe critic on his own work, he was yet blessed with a certain serenity of spirit which checked and soothed the restless fever of the creative brain; a fever often so violent in the painter or the poet as to cause a deep and sometimes fatal reaction and depression. Durand formed a habit of working on and on cheerily till the coveted prize was gained.

He maintained that a landscape painter in his early

studies should not only make careful copies of nature in the fields, but be trained by drawing the human figure, both from the antique and from the living model. Accuracy of eye, with facility and exactness, can rarely, if ever, be acquired without such practice. Such a training quickly asserts itself in the modelling of forms in mountain rock and forest, in cloud structure, the lines of waves, etc. The forms of inanimate nature seldom demand absolute accuracy of drawing ; but in accessory figures, buildings, and animals, it is essential. Durand, though by his drilling as an engraver of figures, and especially of portraits, was habitually true and exact, yet dwelt with great fondness on those qualities which depend on the processes and mysteries of the art, the rendering of subtle and infinitely varying effects of atmosphere, of fleeting clouds, of mist, sunshine, twilight obscurity, and the thousand wondrous phenomena which form the peculiar glory of landscape.

He was twice married, and was happily surrounded by an affectionate family. His daughters delighted to wait upon his steps, to lighten his cares, to cheer his hours of fatigue and rest. His sons rose to manhood to do him honor. The whole fraternity of artists were proud of his achievements, revered his character, and looked up to him with affection. In the

midst of the beautiful surroundings of his home, in a house standing on the spot where he was born, he tranquilly passed a serene old age, modestly wearing the laurels won by the faithful struggles of a noble and useful life ; and patiently submitting himself to the will of God, calmly awaited the summons which, on the 17th day of September, 1886, at the venerable age of ninety years, called him to the eternal life beyond.



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